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## Assembly Passes Fishing for Our Future Act

**New Richmond, WI** – On Tuesday, the Wisconsin State Assembly voted in favor of Assembly Bill 160, Fishing for our Future Act, authored by State Representative Mary Felzkowski (R- Irma) and State Representative Rob Stafsholt (R-New Richmond). The bill provides common sense changes to the regulation of Aquaculture and fish farms in the state of Wisconsin while protecting our great waters across the state. This bill also solidifies Wisconsin’s emerging aquaculture industry as a valid and important part of our state’s agriculture.

“It is nice to see aquaculture on the list as another one of Wisconsin’s great types of farming. This bill promotes rural economic development by allowing the industry to expand and grow in order to compete on the national level. It also allows for better partnerships with the private fish farmers and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to raise fish for stocking programs in our public waters” said Stafsholt.

This bill is a great example of Legislators, Wisconsin DNR, and other stakeholders coming together to produce a piece of legislation that meets the needs of everyone involved. An initial draft of this bill was introduced last session and concerns were brought to the authors by different groups. Representative Stafsholt and Representative Felzkowski sat down with those groups to address their concerns directly.

“We worked with the Wisconsin DNR, Trout Unlimited, Wisconsin Aquaculture Association, and private fish farmers to make sure this bill was in its best form for all parties involved” Stafsholt added.

Wisconsin has a \$21 million aquaculture industry with an estimated 2,800 private fish farms throughout the state that support about 500 jobs. Desires for healthy fish products have significantly increased the demand for fish and seafood in the U.S. Currently, 86 percent of U.S. seafood consumption is imported, leading to a seafood trade deficit of \$10 billion. This bill provides our state's fish farming industry with the consistency farmers need to grow this valuable trade in Wisconsin.

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